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On Socialism and Internationalism

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara

On Socialism and Internationalism

Preface by María del Carmen Ariet García
Introduction by Aijaz Ahmad

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MARÍA DEL CARMEN ARIET GARCÍA*

ERNESTO 'CHE' GUEVARA: SOCIALISM, THE NEW HUMAN BEING, AND THE THIRD WORLD

The years 1965 and 1966 are defining events in the process of Che's revolutionary development; they mark the culmination and beginning of a new stage. From the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 to his departure from Cuba in 1965 to undertake internationalist missions in the Congo and Bolivia, Che left a body of work and thought. In these writings, he aimed to express his opinions and conclusions about the construction of socialism in the so-called Third World countries, drawing from his work in Cuba and the various roles and tasks he took on. Furthermore, he also drew on the accumulated

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experiences of the socialist world, especially from the USSR, and he drew deeply from a detailed study of the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

There are countless writings, articles, speeches, and reflections from this period where Che specifies which objectives, projections, and actions should prevail in undertaking the transition to socialism, the essential goal for achieving the liberation and emancipation of humanity. In almost all of his work, Che's main theses are present, among them the consistent action towards making poor and underdeveloped countries independent and sovereign nations. This premise would have as its focus the formation of a new type of human being as a carrier of changes to take on the fight against exploitation and all forms of domination.

If we analyse his speech at the United Nations in December of 1964, we see that the first months of 1965 marked the end of a stage and the beginning of Che's journey throughout Africa. On this trip to Africa, Che met with leaders of different nations and with leaders of national liberation movements. During the Second Economic Seminar of Afro-Asian Solidarity held in Algiers in February of that year, Che delivered what was for many a shocking and controversial speech. In it, he spoke sharply and specified his positions on the role to be played by the Third World, its confrontation with capitalism, and the need for the socialist countries to

support their struggles for national liberation.

Beyond the criticisms and contradictions generated by these pronouncements, recent history has proven him right in light of the irreparable damage caused by the lack of unity and coherence in the defence of socialism and in ambiguous and dogmatizing positions. If we were to reflect on the path that Che chose, we would see that, after a few months, his decision to begin a new stage had become foreseeable. He embarked on this new stage of struggle to ignite the flame of people's liberation without leaving aside the 'attempt', as he wrote, to offer some conclusions on the integral principles that should be part of the formation of the new human being of the twenty-first century.

The brief statement of what was expressed in Algiers by itself justified the publication of two emblematic texts of Che's theoretical production, 'Socialism and Man in Cuba' (1965) and 'Message to the Tricontinental: Create Two, Three . . . Many Vietnams' (1966).

'Socialism and Man in Cuba' was published for the first time on March 12, 1965, in Uruguay by the journal **Marcha**. It was written during Che's stay in Algiers, where he delivered the previously mentioned speech. From April to November of that year, Che participated in the struggle for the liberation of the Congo. Following his custom, Che wrote of the experience in the Congo in a text entitled 'Congo Diary: Episodes of the Revolutionary

War in the Congo', in which he recollects 'a bitter experience' but one of enormous value as an example of the dedication of the people in the struggle.

Che's departure from the Congo became a crossroads which turned into both a dilemma and an alternative, as it led him to his decision to fight for the total liberation of Latin America. This decision to fight beyond Cuba was not unknown to some. Since the distant days of training in Mexico when he promised to fight for the overthrow of the Batista dictatorship under Fidel's command, Che also committed that, once Cuba was liberated, he would continue the struggle in other countries in the region.

The years 1955 and 1956 marked the beginning of a new facet of life for the person who would become Che Guevara, the revolutionary. This period would eventually lead to the triumph of an authentic people's revolution in Cuba in 1959, conquered through struggle and with the support of the masses. Initially, Che was moved by his commitment towards Fidel's leadership; later, elements of his early thought and his commitment to action were incorporated in the revolutionary process, which transformed Che Guevara into a socialist.

The total dedication to the work of the revolution led Che to a multiplicity of tasks and responsibilities aimed at responding to and solving conflicts in the most expeditious ways in order to move countries in underdeveloped and dependent conditions towards

socialism. This effort and its multiple directions led him to the transformative task of laying the fundamental foundations for the construction of the new society. Among the evaluations that have been made of his contributions, two vital elements are worth highlighting: 1) his total dedication to studying the conditions to make the chosen path of building socialism more coherent and consistent; and 2) his reflections on the experiences that were put into practice in Cuba. The island would become an example that could serve as a foundation for other countries that were under similar conditions and were determined to fight for the greater well-being of the people and for social development.

As part of a consistent practice, this interest compelled him to write texts such as 'Socialism and Man in Cuba' before he departed from Cuba. Though he left Cuba, Che did not forget or abandon the principles for which he fought and worked, not only to consolidate the Cuban revolution but also to propel others onto the road to socialism.

It is not by chance—neither in name nor in practice—that the primary focus of Che's thought was placed on the fundamental role of the human being as a subject acting and committing to the work that he or she is a part of. In Che's opinion, subjectivity and its material expression are actively enhanced as a consequence of the conscious action of the subject. Here, Che follows

the principles wielded by Marx from the early period of his theory. Like Marx, Che was committed to radical transformation—a transformation that must emerge in order to undertake the enormous structural changes of the new society that would substitute the archaic capitalist society.

From that perspective, the reflections elaborated by Che and the need to continue and deepen them become very clear. Among these reflections is historical memory, which is characterized by ascents and setbacks, as is any process of change, which can be improved. It is important to highlight that what is at stake is to carry out a larger project whose centre comes from the human being as the one who must mould himself and mould the whole.

The ways forward and possible solutions are to be found on this higher scale. However difficult it may seem, human beings become the main protagonists who must be formed, like malleable clay. But, they must be formed with the intrinsic properties required by any mechanism that is capable of acting as a necessary instrument for change as a whole. It is a complex and exhausting task—one that is often beyond the immediate capacities of the human being—but it is an essential aspect of this new human being that we must create together.

Che's consistent line on how to create the new human being and how to convince others that a project

was achievable did not spare him from reflecting on the difficult conditions of subsistence and exploitation in which many people had to live, a reality in the most bleak and ignored areas of the world. One such example of this was Cuba's achievement of socialism in the conditions of dependency and underdevelopment. This so-called 'Third World' that rose to fight for real change became a new goal for Che, who understood the real possibility of victory if he could manage to raise the people's consciousness and to create the unity that was necessary to achieve it. This was not—and is not—an easy path. Still, it is possible to come closer to achieving this if the forces are identified that are necessary to reach the ultimate solution, and to achieve a new hegemonic power. This is what Che expressed in Algiers and what he attempted to do in the Congo and in Bolivia. Che would finally be assassinated in Bolivia, but it is here, too, that the seed waits to germinate in the new human beings, who are capable of leading their destinies towards a better world.

That is the essence of his last theses, in which he brings together the dispossessed, united in a message entitled 'Message to the Tricontinental'. Che's 'Message' was written in response to a war that represented the most brutal fight in his time and yet, simultaneously, the most integral fight for humans willing to struggle for their dignity and total emancipation.

The historical setbacks that humanity has undergone are tragic. Logically, people like Che and their loyalty to principles are attacked, and many efforts are made to eliminate them. Nevertheless, the force of Che's thought and actions have become an integral paradigm of these new times. This is reason enough to seek to understand and, in turn, learn from the importance of the works republished in this volume. 'Socialism and Man in Cuba' and 'Message to the Tricontinental' complement each other; they were thought of and written to speak of the struggle and of the triumph and the consolidation of this process, where humanity is and will be centred, and where all efforts must be directed towards spiritual growth. When examined from the point of unity and integration, this is the beginning and continuity of a real and possible strategy, one made up of an extremely powerful force from all the countries that live on the fringes of marginality. It remains, paraphrasing Che, to build a liberating will of the human being, where 'new battle cries of war and victory' resound that enable us to envision the future.

★

AIJAZ AHMAD*

INTRODUCTION

Humanity is the Homeland.

—José Martí

We ourselves will make the man of the twenty-first century.

—Che Guevara

★

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (1928–1967), author of the two classic texts brought together here, was a man who lived his life in the future tense, in permanent rebellion against the world made by capital and empire, and as fighter for revolutionary transformation of that world. A great difficulty in reading him is that he lived and died in a moment of history radically different from ours. His was a time when roughly one-third of humanity lived in

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socialist countries, a worldwide systemic confrontation between capitalism and communism was a fact of daily life, and wars of national liberation were raging in all three continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America. This was the heroic age of anti-imperialist struggles, so to speak, in which the intrinsic connection between revolutionary nationalism and communism was self-evident for countless millions of people. As such, Che's writings have the feel of messages sent in a bottle from a revolutionary past that we intercept as they go on their way to a revolutionary future.

Che was barely 39 years old when he was murdered by imperialism and its henchmen. Studying his life, one has the sense of meteoric speed and of several lives rolled into one. He had trained as a doctor but had also travelled through much of Latin America before finishing his medical studies. Argentinian by birth, he first studied Marxism more or less systematically during his brief sojourn in Guatemala in 1954, and it was there that he first volunteered to take up arms against imperialism, to defend the progressive Árbenz government during the coup staged by the CIA and its mercenaries. He escaped to Mexico where he met Fidel, won his confidence, and made a lifelong commitment to the revolution in Cuba. Joining initially as a doctor for the group of revolutionary exiles, he soon emerged as one of the leading commanders of the Rebel Army and

quickly became something of a legend—and a major theoretician—in the annals of guerrilla warfare.

After the Revolution, Che took up key positions in the revolutionary government such as that of President of the National Bank and the Minister of Industries while also serving as something of a roving ambassador for Cuba in countless capitals of Europe, Asia and Africa, and as a spokesman for the country at numerous international forums, from Algiers to New York. Some of these trips were open and official, which included diplomatic and trade negotiations, including discussions that led to a close, multi-faceted alliance with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries; others were clandestine, with the aim of opening and/or coordinating diverse revolutionary fronts against imperialism. The last and possibly the most ambitious of those clandestine trips, to initiate a revolutionary war in Bolivia that was intended to spread into Argentina, proved fatal, as his guerrilla base was ambushed while he himself was captured and murdered by a CIA-led contingent of the Bolivian Army.

Even as he lived this tumultuous life as a practical revolutionary, he also left behind a formidable intellectual legacy, some of which is yet to be translated from Spanish into other languages. We are presenting two texts here which illustrate different facets of his formidable erudition and intellect. Each was written for a specific purpose and the contents of each are therefore

determined by that purpose. However, the ideas that are expressed here with great force had been germinating in his intellectual repertoire for several years and some articulations of them can be found in a number of his earlier writings and speeches, such as 'Social Ideals of the Rebel Army' (1959), 'Cuba: Historical exception or vanguard in the anticolonial struggle?' (1961), 'The Revolutionary Doctor' (1960), 'To be a Young Communist' (1962), and more.

Let us begin with the context and contours of his 'Message to the Tricontinental'. Cuba hosted the First Conference of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (the Tricontinental Conference) in Havana, January 3–15, 1966. The Conference brought together 512 delegates as well as more than 270 guests and observers from 82 countries. The Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL) was founded at the end of the Conference, on January 15, 1966, which, in turn, published the **Tricontinental Bulletin** that disseminated news of anti-imperialist struggles from all corners of our three continents, and the bimonthly theoretical organ, **Tricontinental**, which served as a forum for publishing the writings of anti-imperialist thinkers from the oppressed nations.

Mehdi Ben Barka, the great Moroccan Marxist in the anti-imperialist mould, who was president of

the international organizing committee for the First Tricontinental Conference, described its significance in the following words:

> The meeting of anti-imperialist organizations in Havana is a historical event because it will unite, in a demonstration of consensus and solidarity, two large contemporary currents of the world revolution: that of the socialist October and the national liberation struggle of Third World countries; [and] because it will be held in Cuba, where both revolutions are taking place . . .

The two texts of Che Guevara brought together in this publication can be read as overlapping reflections on this dialectical connection between communism and anti-imperialism in our epoch.

Che was on his mission of revolutionary solidarity and combat in Africa when the Conference took place in Havana. He drafted his message not for the Conference itself but for a special inaugural issue of the journal that was published on April 16, 1967, and where it appeared under the title Che had given it: 'Create Two, Three . . . Many Vietnams, That Is the Watchword'. The other text appeared under the title 'Socialism and Man in Cuba' in the historic Uruguayan magazine **Marcha** in March 1965. The 'Message to the Tricontinental' was composed as a

call to arms for a worldwide revolutionary uprising against capital and empire: 'imperialism is a world system, the last stage of capitalism—and it must be defeated in a world confrontation . . . [L]et us develop a true proletarian internationalism; with international proletarian armies'. The other essay, 'Socialism and Man in Cuba', is partly a reflection on the revolutionary process in Cuba but is also, to a very significant degree, a reflection on the meaning of communism itself as a process that transforms not only systems of production and class relations, but also human beings themselves: 'The ultimate and most important revolutionary aspiration: to see man liberated from his alienation . . . the individual will reach total consciousness as a social being, which is equivalent to the full realization as a human being, once the chains of alienation are broken. This will be translated concretely into re-appropriating one's true nature through liberated labour . . .' Some passages in this text read as if Che is rewriting passages from Marx's **Manuscripts of 1844** but with a sense of immediacy, as a wager at hand and as a possibility opened up by the very dynamics of the Cuban Revolution and what it could teach, through its example, to liberation struggles unfolding in different corners of the three continents.

'Message to the Tricontinental' begins with a reflection on the kind of 'peace' that had prevailed during the roughly two decades since the end of the Second

World War in 1945 and mounts, **inter alia**, an audacious attack on the theory of peaceful coexistence without mentioning the theory **per se**. He concedes that there had surely not been war between the two great superpowers, the US and the USSR, but the question implicit in the first few pages of the text is this: does the absence of war among great powers really amount to 'peace' and 'peaceful coexistence'? Furthermore, is 'peaceful coexistence' with imperialism really possible? And, is imperialism itself not a force of permanent war across the globe? That is why he begins his text with comments on the Korean War that started almost immediately after the Second World War and in which, as he puts it, 'Under the discredited flag of the United Nations, dozens of countries under the military leadership of the United States participated'. The US deployed close to two million military personnel in that war and dropped a total of 635,000 tons of bombs, including 32,557 tons of napalm. As Che begins his comments on Vietnam, he emphasizes that it has fought against three imperialist powers from three different continents: France, Japan, and the United States. We might add that the tonnage of bombs dropped by the US on Vietnam exceeded all the tonnage dropped by all sides during the Second World War. Even though Che emphasizes that 'the focal point of all contradictions at present is the territory of the peninsula of Indochina and the adjacent areas', he

mentions Korea and Vietnam as primary **examples** of the numerous 'confrontations' the US had imposed since the Second World War on oppressed peoples across the globe. Indeed the US and its allies had been invading and otherwise undermining so many Third World countries with such ferocity that this global machinery of imperialist war amounted to something resembling a Third World War, i.e. a war on the Third World as a whole in an era of peaceful coexistence between Superpowers.

This argument leads to a thinly veiled but bitter criticism of the leading socialist countries and the inadequacy of their support for Vietnam while also noting the drastic consequences of the Sino-Soviet split in the midst of this imperialist war. The first salvo in this line of reasoning comes in the form of a broad admonition, addressed to all but to no one in particular: 'It is not a matter of wishing success to the victim of aggression, but of sharing his fate; one must accompany him to his death or to victory.' But then he elaborates:

> US imperialism is guilty of aggression; its crimes are enormous and cover the whole world. We already know all that, gentlemen! But this guilt also applies to those who, in the defining moment, hesitated to make Vietnam an inviolable part of the socialist world, running, of course, the risks of a war on a global scale, but also forcing a decision upon imperialism.

> Those who maintain a war of abuse and snares—started quite some time ago by the representatives of the two greatest powers of the socialist camp—are guilty, too.
>
> We must ask ourselves, seeking an honest answer: Is Vietnam isolated, or is it not? Is it not maintaining a dangerous equilibrium between the two quarrelling powers?

By 'two quarrelling powers', Che is of course referring to the USSR, the People's Republic of China, and the Sino-Soviet split which had the effect of undermining the world communist movement as a whole. This was not just Che's position. Earlier, speaking from the steps of Havana University in 1965, Fidel had said:

> . . . not even the attacks against North Vietnam have resulted in overcoming the divisions in the bosom of the socialist family. And who can doubt that this division is encouraging the imperialists? Who can doubt that a united front against the imperialist enemy would have made them hesitate—would have made them think a little more carefully before launching their adventurist attacks and their increasingly more brazen intervention in that part of the world?

Even though Cuba was itself under dire threat from US imperialism, Fidel and Che had the courage of their conviction that a just and necessary criticism of a fraternal socialist country in a given situation did not amount to a breach in solidarity.

This line of thinking—that true solidarity with a victim of aggression implies not just sympathy but the willingness to fight and share the victim's fate; that 'a united front against the imperialist enemy' was necessary if Vietnam was to be protected and imperialism defeated on the global scale—led then to the primary theme of Che's 'Message to the Tricontinental': his advocacy of 'Two, Three . . . Many Vietnams'. That was the objective of the Tricontinental Conference and the institutions it created: the vision of coordinated revolutionary armed struggles across the three continents that would overwhelm imperialism by forcing it to disperse its forces all over the world and imposing on it a level of costs of war that would erode its economic power. There is no sense here that the ordeal would be easy: these anti-imperialist fronts are bound to have 'their share of deaths and their immense tragedies'. Nor should it be thought that these views were peculiarly Che's. Fidel was to say something almost identical in his closing speech at the Tricontinental Conference: 'for the Cuban revolutionaries the field of battle against imperialism takes in the whole world . . . Cuban fighters

can be counted on by the revolutionary movement in any corner of the earth . . . as the Havana Declaration says, the duty of every revolutionary is to effect the revolution, and effect it in deed not in word.'

Che composed this text on the eve of his departure for Bolivia to open just such a front, knowing lucidly well that he was staking his own life for his convictions. It ends, therefore, with something of a dirge for a death foretold and accepted in advance: his own. The following can only be read as a premonition of what was to come:

> [I]f some day we have to breathe our last breath on any land, already ours, sprinkled with our blood, let it be known that we have measured the scope of our actions. We only consider ourselves elements in the great army of the proletariat . . . Our every action is a battle cry against imperialism, and a battle hymn for the people's unity against the great enemy of mankind: the United States of America. Wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome, provided that this, our battle cry, may have reached some receptive ear and another hand may be extended to wield our weapons and other men be ready to sing the funeral hymns with the staccato singing of the machine guns and new battle cries of war and victory.

The first couple of pages of Che's other text here, 'Socialism and Man in Cuba', are concerned with clarifying some details pertaining to the making of the Cuban Revolution. All the rest is concerned with what he considers to be the central undertaking of the revolutionary project, and therefore of communism itself. In some earlier texts, Che had offered a rather interesting account of the relationship between the Cuban Revolution and Marxism. In his 'Speech to the First Latin American Youth Congress', for instance, he had said:

> . . . if this revolution is Marxist—and listen well that I say Marxist—it is because the revolution discovered, by its own methods, the road pointed out by Marx . . . if today we are putting into practice what is known as Marxism, it is because we discovered it here . . . In those days . . . a small pamphlet written by Mao Tse-tung fell into our hands . . . The popular forces here, without knowing of the manuals already written about the strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare, used the same methods as those used on the opposite side of the world to combat the dictatorship's forces.

In his 'Notes on the Ideology of the Cuban Revolution', he writes:

> We, practical revolutionaries, initiating our own struggle, simply fulfil laws foreseen by Marx, the scientist. We are simply adjusting ourselves to the predictions of the scientific Marx as we travel this road of rebellion . . . The laws of Marxism are present in the events of the Cuban Revolution, independently of what its leaders profess or fully know of those laws from a theoretical point of view . . .

These are extraordinary passages. Che, Fidel, and their comrades were 'practical revolutionaries' who knew little of Marxist theory of the proletarian revolution or Mao's theory of guerrilla warfare when they were assembling their guerrilla army and setting out to make what amounted to a proletarian revolution. Rather, it was the revolutionary practice itself which demonstrated to them the objective truth of Marxist theory. In 'Socialism and Man in Cuba', he goes on to castigate Western Marxism for holding on to Marx's proposition that revolution is possible only after advanced capitalism has realized all its inherent possibilities and is rent asunder by its own contradictions—whereas, he points out, Lenin had already replaced that notion with his interconnected theories of imperialism and the weakest link, which in turn means that revolutions were henceforth much more likely in the oppressed nations than in the advanced capitalist ones. But then, once a poor, oppressed country

like Cuba does make a revolution, must it then launch on the policy of what used to be called 'socialist primitive accumulation' and try to 'catch up' with the advanced West? Or, is it imperative to follow a different path?

According to Che's argument in this text, Tricontinental revolutions have to base themselves on a wager: that decent, egalitarian, fundamentally good and gracious societies can in fact be built at relatively low levels of industrial production and material wealth; that it is possible to try to transform not only the relations and forces of production as conventionally understood, so as to produce the material conditions essential to the security, well-being and intellectual development of the people, but also to help recover those potentialities of human nature that capitalism distorts and destroys and which are essential for the building of a socialist culture and a humane society. In this view, the worst crime of imperialism is that it distorts human nature itself, suppressing the sociality and spontaneous openness to others that is intrinsic to human nature, and creates, instead, self-centred and acquisitive individuals that are indifferent to the well-being of others—turning the world into a crowd of aliens. In Che's view, the making of what he calls the 'new man and woman'—the unalienated individual with an intrinsic orientation towards a radical sociality—is the central task in creating a socialist society. At one end of his vision were the basic structures of

well-being that would guarantee the material securities without which moral solidarities with others are very difficult indeed, i.e. provisions for health, education, nutrition, etc., not to speak of the ability to endure and develop collectively despite the extreme imperialist violence against the Cuban people. At the other end was a vision of international solidarities and obligations. The dialectic of nationalism and internationalism, so to speak.

★

SHORT CHRONOLOGY

OF ERNESTO 'CHE' GUEVARA

June 14, 1928: Born in Rosario, Argentina.

1953: Che qualified as a physician, specializing in dermatology.

July 7, 1953 – 1954: After travelling throughout Latin America he arrived in Guatemala in 1953 where he meets a group of Cuban exiles who baptize him 'Che'. He witnesses the coup against Jacobo Árbenz organized by the CIA.

July 1955: He meets Fidel Castro and decides to join the 26 July Movement in the fight against the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

November 25, 1956: Led by Fidel Castro, Che and 81 other men board the yacht 'Granma' to start the guerrilla war in Cuba's Sierra Maestra mountains.

July 21, 1957: Che is promoted to Commander. He would go on to lead the 'Ciro Redondo' 8th Column.

February 24, 1958: First broadcast of 'Radio Rebelde', created by Che.

December 29–31, 1958: Che leads the Battle of Santa Clara. This is the final blow against Batista.

January 3, 1959: With the triumph of the Revolution Che arrives in Havana at dawn. He is entrusted by Fidel to occupy the military fortress of La Cabaña.

June 12, 1959: Che leads a Cuban delegation to the United Arab Republic, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Yugoslavia, Myanmar, Japan, Pakistan, Sudan, and Morocco to establish commercial, cultural and diplomatic ties.

October 7, 1959: Che is appointed Head of the Industrialization Department of the National Institute for Land Reform.

November 26, 1959: Che is appointed President of the Bank of Cuba.

February 23, 1961: Che is appointed Minister of Industry.

December 11, 1964: Che speaks at the United Nations General Assembly.

January–March 1965: Travels to China, Mali, Congo, Guinea, Ghana, Dahomey, Tanzania, Egypt, Algeria meeting with heads of governments and leaders of national liberation movements.

February 24, 1965: In Algeria, Che speaks at the Second Economic Seminar of Afro-Asian Solidarity.

April 1, 1965: Under disguise, Che leaves Cuba to join the guerrilla forces of Laurent Kabila in the revolutionary struggle of the Congo.

November 21, 1965: After almost seven months in the Congo and the mission's failure, Che leaves for Tanzania where he stays clandestinely for several weeks. At the end of December, he travelled to Czechoslovakia, where he would also remain clandestinely for several months.

November 3, 1966: Che arrived in Bolivia to begin the armed struggle in the Ñancahuazú area.

October 8, 1967: He is taken prisoner during combat with Bolivian military under the advice of the CIA at

the Quebrada del Yuro.

October 9, 1967: At 1.30 PM Che is assassinated by Sergeant Mario Terán in a small school in the town of La Higuera.

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara

Message to the Tricontinental

Socialism and Man in Cuba

MESSAGE TO THE TRICONTINENTAL*

> Now is the time of the furnaces, and only light should be seen.
>
> —José Martí

★

Twenty-one years have already elapsed since the end of the last world conflict; numerous publications, in every possible language, celebrate this event, symbolized by the defeat of Japan. There is a climate of apparent optimism in many areas of the different camps into which the world is divided.

Twenty-one years without a world war, in these times of maximum confrontations, of violent clashes and sudden changes, appears to be a very high figure. However, without analysing the practical results of this peace (poverty, degradation, increasingly larger exploitation of enormous sectors of humanity) for which

* First published by the Organization of the Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), Havana, April 16, 1967.

all of us have stated that we are willing to fight, we would do well to inquire if this peace is real.

It is not the purpose of these notes to detail the different conflicts of a local character that have been occurring since the surrender of Japan, nor do we intend to recount the numerous and increasing instances of civilian strife which have taken place during these years of apparent peace. It will be enough just to name, as an example against undue optimism, the wars of Korea and Vietnam.

In the case of Korea, after years of savage warfare, the Northern part of the country was submerged in the most terrible devastation known in the annals of modern warfare: riddled with bombs; without factories, schools or hospitals; with absolutely no shelter for housing ten million inhabitants. Under the discredited flag of the United Nations, dozens of countries under the military leadership of the United States participated in this war with the massive intervention of US soldiers and the use, as cannon fodder, of the South Korean population that was enrolled.

On the other side, the army and the people of Korea and the volunteers from the People's Republic of China were furnished with supplies and advice by the Soviet military apparatus. The US tested all sort of weapons of destruction, excluding the thermo-nuclear type, but including, on a limited scale, bacteriological and

chemical warfare. In Vietnam, the patriotic forces of that country have carried on an almost uninterrupted war against three imperialist powers: Japan, whose might suffered an almost vertical collapse after the bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; France, who recovered from that defeated country its Indochinese colonies and ignored the promises it had made in harder times; and the United States, in this last phase of the struggle.

There were limited confrontations in every continent, although in Our America, for a long time, there were only incipient liberation struggles and military coups d'état until the Cuban revolution resounded the alert, signalling the importance of this region. This action attracted the wrath of the imperialists and Cuba was finally obliged to defend its coasts, first at the Playa Girón [Bay of Pigs], and again during the Missile Crisis.

This last incident could have unleashed a war of incalculable proportions if a US–Soviet clash had occurred over the Cuban question.

But, evidently, the focal point of all contradictions at present is the territory of the peninsula of Indochina and the adjacent areas. Laos and Vietnam are shaken by a civil war which has ceased being such by the entry into the conflict of US imperialism with all its might, thus transforming the whole zone into a dangerous detonator ready at any moment to explode. In Vietnam the confrontation has assumed extremely acute characteristics. It is not our

intention, either, to chronicle this war. We shall simply remember and point out some milestones.

In 1954, after the annihilating defeat of Dien Bien Phu, an agreement was signed at Geneva dividing the country into two separate zones; elections were to be held within a term of eighteen months to determine who should govern Vietnam and how the country should be reunified. The US did not sign this document and started manoeuvring to substitute the emperor Bao Dai, who was a French puppet, for a man more amiable to its purposes. This happened to be Ngo Dinh Diem, whose tragic end—that of an orange squeezed dry by imperialism—is well known to all.

During the months following the agreement, optimism reigned supreme in the camp of the popular forces. The last pockets of the anti-French resistance were dismantled in the South of the country and they awaited the fulfilment of the Geneva agreements. But the patriots soon realized there would be no elections—unless the United States felt itself capable of imposing its will in the polls, which was practically impossible even resorting to all its fraudulent methods.

Once again, the fighting broke out in the South and gradually acquired full intensity. At present the US army has increased to over half a million invaders while the puppet forces decrease in number and, above all, have totally lost their combativeness.

Almost two years ago, the United States started systematically bombing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, in yet another attempt to overcome the belligerence of the South and impose, from a position of strength, a meeting at the conference table. At first, the bombardments were more or less isolated occurrences and were adorned with the mask of reprisals for alleged provocations from the North. Later on, as they increased in intensity and regularity, they became one gigantic attack carried out by the air force of the United States, day after day, for the purpose of destroying all vestiges of civilization in the Northern zone of the country. This is an episode of the infamously notorious 'escalation'. The material aspirations of the Yankee world have been fulfilled to a great extent, regardless of the unflinching defence of the Vietnamese anti-aircraft artillery, of the numerous planes shot down (over 1,700) and of the socialist countries' aid in war supplies.

There is a sad reality: Vietnam—a nation representing the aspirations, the hopes of a whole world of forgotten peoples—is tragically alone. This nation must endure the furious attacks of US technology, with practically no possibility of reprisals in the South and only some of defence in the North—but always alone. The solidarity of all progressive forces of the world towards the people of Vietnam today is similar to the bitter irony of the plebeians coaxing on the gladiators in the Roman arena.

It is not a matter of wishing success to the victim of aggression, but of sharing his fate; one must accompany him to his death or to victory.

When we analyse the lonely situation of the Vietnamese people, we are overcome by anguish at this illogical moment of humanity.

US imperialism is guilty of aggression; its crimes are enormous and cover the whole world. We already know all that, gentlemen! But this guilt also applies to those who, in the defining moment, hesitated to make Vietnam an inviolable part of the socialist world, running, of course, the risks of a war on a global scale, but also forcing a decision upon imperialism. Those who maintain a war of abuse and snares—started quite some time ago by the representatives of the two greatest powers of the socialist camp—are guilty, too.

We must ask ourselves, seeking an honest answer: Is Vietnam isolated, or is it not? Is it not maintaining a dangerous equilibrium between the two quarrelling powers? And what great people these are! What stoicism and courage! And what a lesson for the world is contained in this struggle!

Not for a long time shall we be able to know if President Johnson ever seriously thought of bringing about some of the reforms needed by his people in order to polish the edges of the class contradictions that grow with explosive power more and more with the passing of

every day. The truth is that the improvements announced under the pompous title of the struggle for a 'Great Society' have dropped into the cesspool of Vietnam.

The largest of all imperialist powers feels in its own guts the bleeding inflicted by a poor and underdeveloped country; its fabulous economy feels the strain of the war effort. Murder is ceasing to be the most convenient business for its monopolies. Defensive weapons, and never in adequate numbers, are all that these extraordinary soldiers have besides love for their homeland, love for their society, and unsurpassed courage. But imperialism is being bogged down in Vietnam; it is unable to find a way out and desperately seeks one that will overcome with dignity this dangerous situation in which it now finds itself. Furthermore, the Four Points put forward by the North and the Five Points of the South now corner imperialism, making the confrontation even more decisive.

Everything seems to indicate that peace—this unstable peace which bears that name for the sole reason that no worldwide conflagration has taken place—is again in danger of being destroyed by some irrevocable and unacceptable step taken by the United States. What role shall we, the exploited people of the world, play? The peoples of the three continents focus their attention on Vietnam and learn their lesson. Since imperialists blackmail humanity by threatening it with

war, the wise reaction is not to fear war. The general tactics of the people should be to launch a constant and a firm attack on all fronts where the confrontation is taking place. In those places where this meagre peace we have has been violated, what is our duty? To liberate ourselves at any price.

The world panorama is of great complexity. The struggle for liberation has not yet been undertaken by some countries of ancient Europe, which are sufficiently developed to realize the contradictions of capitalism, but weak to such a degree that they are unable either to follow imperialism or even to start on their own road. Their contradictions will reach an explosive stage during the forthcoming years—but their problems, and, consequently, their own solutions, are different from those of our dependent and economically underdeveloped countries.

The fundamental field of imperialist exploitation comprises the three underdeveloped continents: America, Asia, and Africa. Every country also has its own characteristics, but each continent, as a whole, also presents a certain unity.

Our America is made up of a group of more or less homogeneous countries and, in almost all of its territory, US monopolist capital maintains an absolute supremacy. Puppet governments or, in the best of cases, weak and fearful local rulers, are incapable of contradicting

orders from their Yankee master. The United States has nearly reached the climax of its political and economic domination; it could hardly advance much more. Any change in the situation could bring about a setback. Its policy is to maintain that which has already been conquered. The line of action, at the present time, is limited to the brutal use of force with the purpose of thwarting the liberation movements, no matter of what type they might happen to be.

The slogan 'we will not allow another Cuba' hides the possibility of perpetrating aggressions without fear of reprisal, such as the one carried out against the Dominican Republic or, before that, the massacre in Panama. It hides, too, the clear warning stating that Yankee troops are ready to intervene anywhere in America where the ruling regime may be altered, thus endangering their interests. This policy enjoys an almost absolute impunity. The OAS is a suitable mask, in spite of its unpopularity; the inefficiency of the UN is ridiculous as well as tragic; the armies of all American countries are ready to intervene in order to smash their people. The International of Crime and Treason has in fact been organized. On the other hand, the autochthonous bourgeoisies have entirely lost their capacity to oppose imperialism—if they ever had it—and they have become the last card in the pack. There are no other alternatives; either a socialist revolution or a caricature of a revolution.

Asia is a continent with many different characteristics. The struggles for liberation waged against a series of European colonial powers resulted in the establishment of more or less progressive governments, whose ulterior evolution has brought about, in some cases, the deepening of the primary objectives of national liberation and, in others, a setback towards the adoption of pro-imperialist positions.

From an economic point of view, the United States had very little to lose and much to gain from Asia. These changes benefited its interests; the struggle to overthrow other neocolonial powers and penetrate new spheres of action in the economic field is sometimes carried out directly, occasionally through Japan.

But there are special political conditions, particularly in Indochina, which create in Asia certain characteristics of paramount importance and play a decisive role in the entire US military strategy. The imperialists encircle China through South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, South Vietnam and Thailand—at least.

This dual situation, a strategic interest as important as the military encirclement of the People's Republic of China and the penetration of these great markets—which they do not yet dominate—turns Asia into one of the most explosive points of the world today, in spite of its apparent stability outside of the Vietnamese war zone.

The Middle East, though it geographically belongs to

this continent, has its own contradictions and is actively in ferment; it is impossible to foretell how far this cold war between Israel, backed by the imperialists, and the progressive countries of that zone will go. This is just another one of the volcanoes threatening to erupt in the world today.

Africa offers an almost virgin territory to the neocolonial invasion. There have been changes which, to some extent, forced neocolonial powers to give up their former absolute prerogatives. But when these changes are carried out uninterruptedly, colonialism continues in the form of neocolonialism, with similar effects as far as the economic situation is concerned. The United States had no colonies in this region but is now struggling to penetrate its associates' properties. It can be said that, following the strategic plans of US imperialism, Africa constitutes its long-range reservoir. Its present investments, though, are only important in the Union of South Africa, and its penetration is beginning to be felt in the Congo, Nigeria and other countries where a violent rivalry with other imperialist powers is beginning to take place (in a peaceful manner up to the present time).

So far, it does not have great interests to defend except for its alleged right to intervene in every spot of the world where its monopolies detect huge profits or the existence of large reserves of raw materials. All this past history justifies our concern regarding the possibilities of

liberating the peoples within a long or a short period of time.

If we stop to analyse Africa, we shall observe that in the Portuguese colonies of Guinea, Mozambique and Angola the struggle is waged with relative intensity, with concrete success in the former and with variable success in the latter two. In the Congo we still witness the dispute between Lumumba's successors and the old accomplices of Tshombe, a dispute which at the present time seems to favour the latter—those who have 'pacified' a large area of the country for their own benefit—though the war is still latent.

In Rhodesia we have a different problem: British imperialism used every means within its reach to place power in the hands of the white minority, who, at the present time, unlawfully holds it. The conflict, from the British point of view, is absolutely unofficial; this Western power, with its habitual diplomatic cleverness—also called hypocrisy in the strict sense of the word—presents a facade of displeasure before the measures adopted by the government of Ian Smith. Its crafty attitude is supported by some Commonwealth countries that follow it but is attacked by a large group of countries belonging to Black Africa, whether or not they are servile economic lackeys of British imperialism.

Should the rebellious efforts of these patriots succeed, and this movement receive the effective support of

neighbouring African nations, the situation in Rhodesia may become extremely explosive. But, for the moment, all of these problems are being discussed in harmless organizations such as the UN, the Commonwealth and the OAU.

The social and political evolution of Africa does not lead us to expect a continental revolution. The liberation struggle against the Portuguese should end victoriously, but Portugal is of no significance in the imperialist field. The confrontations of revolutionary importance are those which place at bay the entirety of the imperialist apparatus; this does not mean, however, that we should stop fighting for the liberation of the three Portuguese colonies and for the deepening of their revolutions.

When the black masses of South Africa or Rhodesia start their authentic revolutionary struggle, or when the impoverished masses of a nation rise up to rescue their right to a decent life from the hands of the ruling oligarchies, a new era will begin in Africa.

Up to now, army putsches follow one another; a group of officers succeeds another or substitutes a ruler who no longer serves their caste interests or those of the powers who covertly manage him—but there are no great popular upheavals. In the Congo, these characteristics appeared briefly, generated by the memory of Lumumba, but they have been losing strength in the last few months.

In Asia, as we have seen, the situation is explosive.

The points of friction are not only Vietnam and Laos, where there is fighting; Cambodia is also such a point, where at any time a direct US aggression may start, as are Thailand, Malaysia, and, of course, Indonesia, where we cannot assume that the last word has been said, despite the annihilation of the Communist Party in that country when the reactionaries took over. And, of course, the Middle East.

In Latin America, the armed struggle is going on in Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela and Bolivia; the first uprisings are cropping up in Brazil. There are also some pockets of resistance which appear and then are extinguished. But almost all the countries of this continent are ripe for a type of struggle that, in order to achieve victory, cannot be content with anything less than establishing a government of socialist tendencies.

In this continent, practically only one tongue is spoken (with the exception of Brazil, with whose people those who speak Spanish can easily make themselves understood, owing to the great similarity of both languages). There is such a great similarity between the classes in these countries that they have attained an 'international American'-type identity among themselves, much more complete than in the other continents. Language, habits, religion, a common foreign master, unite them. The degree and the form of exploitation are similar for both the exploiters and the men they exploit in the majority

of the countries of Our America. And rebellion is ripening swiftly in it.

We may ask ourselves: how shall this rebellion flourish? What type will it be? We have maintained for quite some time now that, owing to the similarity of their characteristics, the struggle in Our America will achieve continental proportions in due course. It shall be the scene of many great battles fought for the liberation of humanity.

Within the frame of this struggle of a continental scale, the battles that are now taking place are only episodes—but they have already furnished their martyrs, they shall figure in the history of Our America as having given their necessary blood in this last stage of the fight for the total freedom of man. These names will include Comandante Turcios Lima, Father Camilo Torres, Comandante Fabricio Ojeda, Comandantes Lobatón and Luis de la Puente Uceda, all outstanding figures in the revolutionary movements of Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela and Peru.

But the active mobilization of the people creates its new leaders; César Montes and Yon Sosa raise up their flag in Guatemala; Fabio Vázquez and Marulanda in Colombia; Douglas Bravo in the Western part of the country and Américo Martín in El Bachiller, both directing their respective Venezuelan fronts.

New uprisings shall take place in these and other

countries of Our America, as has already happened in Bolivia, and they shall continue to grow in the midst of all the hardships inherent to this dangerous profession of being modern revolutionaries. Many shall perish, victims of their errors; others will fall in the tough battle that approaches; new fighters and new leaders will appear in the warmth of the revolutionary struggle. The people will create their warriors and leaders in the selective framework of the war itself; and Yankee agents of repression shall increase. Today, there are military aides in all the countries where armed struggle is growing; the Peruvian army apparently carried out a successful action against the revolutionaries in that country, an army also trained and advised by the Yankees. But if the pockets of war grow with sufficient political and military insight, they will become practically unstoppable and will force the Yankees to send reinforcements. In Peru itself many new figures, practically unknown, are now reorganizing the guerrilla. Little by little, the obsolete weapons, which are sufficient for the repression of small armed bands, will be exchanged for modern armaments and the US military aides will be substituted by actual fighters until, at a given moment, they are forced to send an increasingly greater number of regular troops to ensure the relative stability of a government whose national puppet army is disintegrating before the impetuous attacks of the guerrillas. It is the road of Vietnam; it is the road that

should be followed by the people; it is the road that will be followed in Our America, with the advantage that the armed groups could create Coordinating Councils to embarrass the repressive forces of Yankee imperialism and accelerate the revolutionary triumph.

America, a forgotten continent in the last liberation struggles, is now beginning to make itself heard through the Tricontinental and, in the voice of the vanguard of its people, the Cuban Revolution, will today have a task of much greater relevance: creating a second or a third Vietnam, or the second and third Vietnam of the world.

We must bear in mind that imperialism is a world system, the last stage of capitalism—and it must be defeated in a world confrontation. The strategic end of this struggle should be the destruction of imperialism. Our share, the responsibility of the exploited and underdeveloped of the world is to eliminate the foundations of imperialism: our oppressed nations, from where they extract capital, raw materials, cheap technicians and labour, and to which they export new capital—instruments of domination—arms and all kinds of articles, thus submerging us in an absolute dependence. The fundamental element of this strategic end will be the real liberation of all people, a liberation that will be brought about through armed struggle in most cases and that will be, in Our America, almost indefectibly, a Socialist Revolution.

While envisaging the destruction of imperialism, it is necessary to identify its head, which is no other than the United States of America.

We must carry out a general task with the tactical purpose of getting the enemy out of its natural environment, forcing him to fight in regions where his own life and habits will clash with the existing reality. We must not underrate our adversary; the US soldier has technical capabilities and is backed by weapons and resources of such magnitude that render him frightful. He lacks the essential ideologic motivation which his bitterest enemies of today—the Vietnamese soldiers—have in the highest degree. We will only be able to overcome that army by undermining their morale—and this is accomplished by defeating it and causing it repeated sufferings.

But this brief outline of victories carries within itself the immense sacrifice of the people, sacrifices that should be demanded beginning today, in plain daylight, and that perhaps may be less painful than those we would have to endure if we constantly avoided battle in an attempt to have others pull our chestnuts out of the fire.

It is probable, of course, that the last liberated country shall accomplish this without an armed struggle and the sufferings of a long and cruel war against the imperialists—this they might avoid. But perhaps it will be impossible to avoid this struggle or its effects in a global

dispute; the suffering would be the same, or perhaps even greater. We cannot foresee the future, but we should never give in to the defeatist temptation of being the vanguard of a nation which yearns for freedom but abhors the struggle it entails and awaits its freedom as a crumb of victory.

It is absolutely just to avoid all useless sacrifices. That is why it is so important to be clear about the real possibilities that dependent America may have of liberating itself through peaceful means. For us, the solution to this question is quite clear: the present moment may or may not be the proper one for starting the struggle, but we cannot harbour any illusions—nor do we have the right to do so—that freedom can be obtained without fighting. And these battles shall not be mere street fights with stones against tear gas, or of peaceful general strikes; nor shall it be the battle of a furious people destroying in two or three days the repressive scaffolds of the ruling oligarchies. The struggle shall be long and harsh, and its front shall be in the guerrilla's refuges, in the cities, in the homes of the fighters—where the repressive forces shall go seeking easy victims among their families—in the massacred rural population, in the villages or cities destroyed by the bombardments of the enemy.

They are pushing us into this struggle. There is no alternative: we must prepare it and we must decide to undertake it.

The beginning will not be easy; it will be extremely difficult. The entirety of the oligarchies' capacity for repression, all their capacity for brutality and demagoguery, will be placed at the service of their cause. Our mission, in the first hour, shall be to survive; later, we shall follow the perennial example of the guerrilla, carrying out armed propaganda (in the Vietnamese sense, that is, the propaganda of bullets, of the battles won or lost—but fought—against the enemy). The great lesson of the invincibility of the guerrillas is taking root in the dispossessed masses. The galvanizing of the national spirit, the preparation for harder tasks, for resisting even more violent repressions. Hatred is an element of the struggle; a relentless hatred of the enemy that impels us over and beyond the natural limitations of human beings and transforms them into an effective, violent, selective and cold killing machine. This is how our soldiers must be; a people without hatred cannot vanquish a brutal enemy.

We must carry the war into every corner where the enemy brings it: to his home, to his centres of entertainment—a total war. We must prevent him from having a moment of peace, a quiet moment outside of his barracks or even inside; we must attack him wherever he may be, make him feel like a cornered beast wherever he may move. Then his morale shall begin to decline. He will even become more beastly, but we will notice how

the signs of decadence begin to appear.

And let us develop a true proletarian internationalism; with international proletarian armies; the flag under which we fight would be the sacred cause of redeeming humanity. To die under the flag of Vietnam, of Venezuela, of Guatemala, of Laos, of Guinea, of Colombia, of Bolivia, of Brazil—to name only a few sites of today's armed struggle—would be equally glorious and desirable for an American, an Asian, an African, even a European.

Each drop of blood spilled in any country under whose flag one has not been born is an experience passed on to those who survive, to be added later to the liberation struggle of his country of origin. When any people is liberated, it marks a phase won in the battle for the liberation of one's own country.

The time has come to settle our discrepancies and place everything at the service of our struggle.

We all know that struggles for liberation stir great controversies in the world; we cannot hide it. We also know that these struggles have reached such a character and such intensity that the possibility of dialogue and reconciliation seems extremely difficult, if not impossible. It is a useless task to initiate a dialogue with avoidant opponents. But the enemy is there; he strikes every day, and threatens us with new blows—and these blows will unite us, today, tomorrow, or the day after. Whoever understands this first, and prepares for this necessary

union will have the people's gratitude.

Owing to the virulence and the intransigence with which each cause is defended, we, the dispossessed, cannot take sides for one form or the other of these discrepancies, even when sometimes we coincide with the contentions of one party or the other, or in a greater measure with those of one part more than with those of the other. In times of war, the expression of current differences constitutes a weakness; but at this stage, it is an illusion to attempt to settle them by means of words. History shall erode them or shall give them their true meaning.

In our world in struggle, every discrepancy regarding tactics, the methods of action for the attainment of limited objectives, should be analysed with due respect to another man's opinions. Regarding our great strategic objective—the total destruction of imperialism by armed struggle—we should be uncompromising.

Let us sum up our hopes for victory: the destruction of imperialism by eliminating its firmest bulwark—the oppression exercised by the United States of America—to carry out, as a tactical method, the people's gradual liberation, one by one or in groups, driving the enemy into a difficult fight away from its own territory, and dismantling all its bases of sustenance, that is, its dependent territories.

This means a long war. And—once more—we repeat

it, a cruel war. Let no one fool himself at the outset and let no one hesitate when it begins for fear of the consequences it may bring to his people. It is almost our sole hope for victory. We cannot avoid the call of the hour. Vietnam is pointing it out with its endless lesson of heroism, its tragic and everyday lesson of struggle and death for the attainment of final victory.

There, the imperialist soldiers endure the discomfort of those who, used to enjoying the US standard of living, have to live in a hostile land with the insecurity of being unable to move without being aware of walking in enemy territory, death to those who dare take a step out of their fortified encampment, the permanent hostility of the entire population. All of this has internal repercussions in the United States: it propels the resurgence of an element which is being minimized in spite of its vigour by all imperialist forces; class struggle even within its own territory.

How close we could look into a bright future should two, three or many Vietnams flourish throughout the world with their share of deaths and their immense tragedies, their everyday heroism and their repeated blows against imperialism, impelled to disperse their forces under the sudden attack of the increasing hatred of all people of the world!

And if we were all capable of uniting to make our blows stronger and infallible, and so increase the effectiveness

of all kinds of support given to the struggling people—how great and close would that future be!

If we, in a small point of the world map, are able to fulfil our duty and place at the disposal of this struggle whatever little of ourselves we are permitted to give: our lives, our sacrifice, and if some day we have to breathe our last breath on any land, already ours, sprinkled with our blood, let it be known that we have measured the scope of our actions. We only consider ourselves elements in the great army of the proletariat, but we are proud of having learned from the Cuban Revolution, and from its maximum leader, the great lesson emanating from his attitude in this part of the world: 'What do the dangers or the sacrifices of a man or of a nation matter, when the destiny of humanity is at stake.'

Our every action is a battle cry against imperialism, and a battle hymn for the people's unity against the great enemy of mankind: the United States of America. Wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome, provided that this, our battle cry, may have reached some receptive ear and another hand may be extended to wield our weapons and other men be ready to sing the funeral hymns with the staccato singing of the machine guns and new battle cries of war and victory.

SOCIALISM AND MAN IN CUBA*

Dear comrade,

I am completing these notes in the course of my trip through Africa, driven by my desire to come through with my promise, even if belatedly. I would like to do so by addressing the theme set forth in the title above. I think it may be of interest to Uruguayan readers.

A common argument from the mouths of capitalist spokespeople in the ideological struggle against socialism is that socialism—or the period of building socialism into which we have entered—is characterized by the abolition of the individual in the interest of the state. I will not try to refute this argument solely on theoretical grounds, but rather to establish the facts as they exist in Cuba and then add comments of a general nature. Let me begin by broadly sketching the history of our revolutionary struggle before and after taking power.

As is well known, July 26, 1953, is the exact date that the revolutionary activities began that would culminate

* This letter was sent to Carlos Quijano, the editor of the Uruguayan weekly publication **Marcha**. It was published on March 12, 1965.

in January 1959. In the early morning of that day, a group led by Fidel Castro attacked the Moncada barracks in the Oriente Province. The attack was a failure; the failure became a disaster; and the survivors ended up in prison, beginning the revolutionary struggle again after they were freed by an amnesty.

During this process, in which there were only seeds of socialism, man was a fundamental factor. We put our trust in him—individual, specific, with a first and last name—and the triumph or failure of the mission entrusted to him depended on that man's capacity for action.

Then came the stage of guerrilla struggle. It developed in two distinct environments: the people—the still sleeping mass that had to be mobilized—and its vanguard, the guerrillas, the motor force of the mobilization, the generator of revolutionary consciousness and militant enthusiasm. This vanguard was the catalysing agent that created the subjective conditions necessary for victory. Here again, in the framework of the proletarianization of our thinking, of this revolution that took place in our habits and our minds, the individual was the fundamental factor. Every one of the combatants of the Sierra Maestra who reached an upper rank in the revolutionary forces has a record of outstanding deeds to his credit; each attained their rank on this basis.

This was the first heroic period in which combatants

struggled for roles with greater responsibilities, greater dangers, with no other satisfaction than fulfilling a duty. In our work of revolutionary education, we frequently return to this instructive theme. The man of the future can be glimpsed in the attitude of our fighters.

The act of total dedication to the revolutionary cause was repeated in other moments of our history. During the October Crisis and in the days of Hurricane Flora we saw exceptional deeds of valour and sacrifice performed by an entire people. Finding the method to perpetuate this heroic attitude in daily life is, from the ideological standpoint, one of our fundamental tasks.

In January 1959, the revolutionary government was established with the participation of various members of the treacherous bourgeoisie. The presence of the Rebel Army was the basic element constituting the guarantee of power.

Serious contradictions developed right away. In the first instance, in February 1959, these were resolved when Fidel Castro assumed leadership of the government, taking the post of prime minister. This process culminated in July of the same year with the resignation of President Urrutia under pressure from the masses.

In the history of the Cuban Revolution there now appeared a character, well defined in its features, which would systematically reappear: the masses. This multifaceted being is not, as is claimed, the sum of

elements of the same type (reduced, moreover, to that same type by the ruling system), which acts like a flock of sheep. It is true that it follows its leaders, particularly Fidel Castro, without hesitation. But the degree to which he won this trust results precisely from having interpreted the full meaning of the people's desires and aspirations, and from the sincere struggle to fulfil the promises made.

The masses participated in agrarian reform and in the difficult task of administering state enterprises; they went through the heroic experience of the Playa Girón [Bay of Pigs]; they were hardened by the battles against various groups of bandits armed by the CIA; they lived through one of the most important defining moments of modern times during the October Crisis; and today they continue to work to build socialism.

Viewed superficially, it might appear that those who speak of the subordination of the individual to the state are right. The masses carry out the tasks set by the government with unmatched enthusiasm and discipline, whether in the field of the economy, culture, defence, sports, etc. The initiative generally comes from Fidel, or from the revolutionary leadership, and is explained to the people, who make it their own. In some cases the Party and government take a local experience and generalize it, following the same procedure.

Nevertheless, the state sometimes makes mistakes. When one of these mistakes occurs, one notes a decline in

collective enthusiasm due to the effect of a quantitative decrease in each of the elements that make up the mass; work is paralysed until it is reduced to an insignificant level; and it is time to make a correction. That is what happened in March 1962 as a result of the sectarian policy imposed on the Party by Aníbal Escalante.

Clearly this mechanism is not enough to ensure a succession of sensible measures; a more structured connection with the masses is needed, which we must improve in the course of the coming years. But, as far as initiatives originating in the upper strata of the government are concerned, we are currently utilizing the almost intuitive method of sounding out general reactions to the problems that we are facing.

In this, Fidel is a master. His own special way of becoming integrated with the people can be appreciated only by seeing him in action. At the great public mass meetings, one can observe something like the dialogue of two tuning forks whose vibrations interact, producing new sounds. Fidel and the masses begin to vibrate together in a dialogue of growing intensity until they reach the climax in an abrupt conclusion crowned by our cry of struggle and victory.

The difficult thing to understand for someone who is not living through the experience of the Revolution is this close dialectical unity between the individual and the masses, in which both are interrelated and, at the

same time, in which the masses, as an aggregate of individuals, interact with its leaders.

Some phenomena of this kind can be seen under capitalism, when politicians appear capable of mobilizing popular opinion. But when these are not genuine social movements—if they were, it would not be entirely correct to call them capitalist—they live only so long as the individual who inspires them, or until the harshness of capitalist society puts an end to the people's illusions. In capitalist society, man is controlled by a pitiless law usually beyond their comprehension. The alienated human being is tied to society as a whole by an invisible umbilical cord: the law of value. This law acts upon all aspects of one's life, shaping its course and destiny.

The laws of capitalism, which are blind and are invisible to ordinary people, act upon the individual without him noticing. One sees only the vastness of a seemingly infinite horizon ahead. That is how it is painted by capitalist propaganda, which purports to draw a lesson from the example of Rockefeller—whether or not it is true—about the possibilities of individual success. The amount of poverty and suffering required for a Rockefeller to emerge, and the amount of depravity entailed in the accumulation of a fortune of such magnitude, are left out of the picture, and it is not always possible for the popular forces to expose this clearly. (A

discussion of how the workers in the imperialist countries gradually lose the spirit of working-class internationalism due to a certain degree of complicity in the exploitation of the dependent countries, and how this at the same time weakens the spirit of struggle of the masses in the imperialist countries, would be appropriate here, but that is a theme that goes beyond the scope of these notes.)

In any case, the road to success is portrayed as beset with perils—perils that, it would seem, an individual with the proper qualities can overcome to attain the goal. The reward is seen in the distance; the path is solitary. Furthermore, it is a race among wolves; one can win only at the cost of others' failure.

I would now like to try to define the individual, the actor in this strange and moving drama of the building of socialism, in a dual existence as a unique being and as a member of society. I think that it is simplest to recognize the individual's quality of incompleteness, of being an unfinished product.

The vestiges of the past are brought into the present in one's consciousness, and a continual labour is necessary to eradicate them. The process is two-sided. On the one hand, society acts through direct and indirect education; on the other, the individual submits to a conscious process of self-education. The new society in formation has to compete fiercely with the past. This past makes itself felt not only in one's consciousness—in which the residue of

an education systematically oriented towards isolating the individual still weighs heavily—but also through the very character of this transition period in which commodity relations still persist. The commodity is the economic cell of capitalist society. So long as it exists, its effects will make themselves felt in the organization of production and, consequently, in consciousness.

Marx outlined the transition period as resulting from the explosive transformation of the capitalist system destroyed by its own contradictions. The reality of the past has shown us, however, that some countries that were weak limbs on the tree of imperialism were torn off first—a phenomenon foreseen by Lenin. In these countries, capitalism had developed sufficiently to make its effects felt by the people in one way or another. But it was not capitalism's internal contradictions that, having exhausted all possibilities, caused the system to explode. The struggle for liberation from a foreign oppressor; the misery caused by external events such as war, whose consequences led the privileged classes to fall back onto the backs of the exploited; liberation movements aimed at overthrowing neocolonial regimes—these are the usual factors in unleashing this kind of explosion. Conscious action does the rest.

A complete education for social labour has not yet taken place in these countries, and wealth is far from being within the reach of the masses through the simple

process of appropriation. Underdevelopment, on the one hand, and the usual flight of capital to 'civilized' countries, on the other, make a rapid transition without sacrifices impossible. There remains a long way to go in constructing the economic base, and the temptation is great to follow the beaten track of material interest as the lever with which to accelerate development.

There is the danger that the forest will not be seen through the trees. Following the pipe dream of achieving socialism with the help of the dull instruments left to us by capitalism (the commodity as the economic cell, profitability, individual material interest as a lever, etc.) can lead to a dead end. And, when you wind up there after having travelled a long distance with many crossroads, it is hard to see just where you took the wrong turn. Meanwhile, the economic foundation that has been laid has done its work of undermining the development of consciousness. In order to build communism—at the same time building new material foundations—it is necessary to build the new man.

That is why it is so important to choose the right instrument to mobilize the masses. This instrument must be moral in character, without neglecting a correct use of the material incentive—especially of a social character.

As I have already said, in moments of great peril it is easy to muster moral incentives in order to retain their effectiveness. However, this requires the development of

a consciousness in which there is a new scale of values. Society as a whole must be converted into a gigantic school.

The rough outline of this phenomenon is similar to the process by which capitalist consciousness was formed in its initial period. Capitalism uses force, but it also educates people in the system. Direct propaganda is carried out by those entrusted with explaining the inevitability of class society, either through some theory of divine origin or a mechanical theory of natural law. This lulls the masses, since they see themselves as being oppressed by an evil against which it is impossible to struggle.

Next comes hope; in this, capitalism differed from the earlier caste systems, which offered no way out. For some, the principle of the caste system will remain in effect: the reward for the obedient is to be transported to some fabulous other world after death where, according to the old beliefs, good people are rewarded. For other people, there is this innovation: class divisions are determined by fate, but individuals can rise out of their class through work, initiative, etc. This process, and the myth of the self-made man, is profoundly hypocritical: it is the self-serving demonstration that a lie is the truth.

In our case, direct education acquires a much greater importance. The explanation is convincing because it is true; no subterfuge is needed. It is carried out by the

state's educational apparatus as a function of general, technical and ideological education through such agencies as the Ministry of Education and the Party's dissemination apparatus. Education takes hold among the masses and the foreseen new attitude tends to become a habit. The masses continue to make it their own and to influence those who have not yet educated themselves. This indirect form of educating the masses is equally as powerful.

But the process is a conscious one. Individuals continually feel the impact of the new social power and perceive that they do not entirely measure up to its standards. Under the pressure of indirect education, they try to adjust themselves to a situation that they feel is right and that their own lack of development had prevented them from reaching previously. They educate themselves.

In this period of building socialism, we can see the new man being born. The image is not yet completely finished—it never will be, since the process goes forward hand in hand with the development of new economic forms. Aside from those whose lack of education makes them take the solitary road towards satisfying their own personal ambitions, there are those—even within this new panorama of a unified march forward—who have a tendency to walk separately from the masses accompanying them. What is important, however, is that,

each day, men are acquiring ever more consciousness of the need for their incorporation into society and, at the same time, of their importance as the motor of that society.

They no longer travel completely alone over lost roads towards distant aspirations. They follow their vanguard, consisting of the Party, the advanced workers, the advanced men who walk in unity with the masses and in close communion with them. The vanguard has its eyes fixed on the future and its reward, but this is not a vision of reward for the individual. The prize is the new society in which men will have different characteristics: the society of communist man.

The road is long and full of difficulties. At times we lose our way and must turn back. At other times, we go too fast and separate ourselves from the masses. Sometimes we go too slow and feel the hot breath of those treading at our heels. In our zeal as revolutionaries, we try to move ahead as fast as possible, clearing the way. But we know we must draw our nourishment from the masses, who can advance more rapidly only if we inspire them by our example.

Despite the importance given to moral incentives, the fact that there remains a division into two main groups (excluding, of course, the minority that for one reason or another does not participate in building socialism) indicates the relative lack of the development of social

consciousness. The vanguard group is ideologically more advanced than the masses; the latter understands the new values, but not sufficiently. While among the former there has been a qualitative change that enables them to make sacrifices in their capacity as the vanguard, the latter see only part of the picture and must be subject to incentives and pressures of a certain intensity. This is the dictatorship of the proletariat operating not only on the defeated class but also on individuals of the victorious class.

All of this means that, for complete success, a series of mechanisms, of revolutionary institutions, is needed. Along with the image of the multitudes marching towards the future comes the concept of institutionalization as a harmonious array of channels, steps, restraints and well-oiled mechanisms which facilitate the advance, which facilitate the natural selection of those destined to march in the vanguard, and which bestow rewards on those who fulfil their duties and punishments on those who commit a crime against the society that is being built.

This institutionalization of the Revolution has not yet been achieved. We are looking for something new that will permit a complete identification between the government and the community in its entirety, something appropriate to the special conditions of building socialism, while avoiding at all costs transplanting the

common places of bourgeois democracy—such as legislative chambers, for example—into the society in formation. Some experiments aimed at the gradual institutionalization of the Revolution have been made, but without undue haste. The greatest brake has been our fear that any appearance of formality might separate us from the masses and from the individual, which might make us lose sight of the ultimate and most important revolutionary aspiration: to see man liberated from his alienation.

Despite this lack of institutions, which must be overcome gradually, the masses are now making history as a conscious collective of individuals fighting for the same cause. Man under socialism, despite his alleged standardization, is more complete; despite the lack of a perfect mechanism, the opportunities for self-expression and making oneself felt in the social organism are infinitely greater.

It is still necessary to deepen conscious participation—individual and collective—in all the structures of management and production, and to link this to the idea of the need for technical and ideological education so that the individual will realize that these processes are closely interdependent and their advancement is parallel. In this way, the individual will reach total consciousness as a social being, which is equivalent to the full realization as a human being, once the chains of

alienation are broken. This will be translated concretely into re-appropriating one's true nature through liberated labour and the expression of one's own human condition through culture and art.

In order to develop a new culture, work must acquire a new status. Man-as-a-commodity ceases to exist, and a system is installed that establishes a quota for the fulfilment of one's social duty. The means of production belong to society, and the machine is merely the trench where duty is performed. Man begins to free his thinking from the annoying fact that one needs to work to satisfy one's animal needs; he starts to see himself reflected in his work and to understand his full stature as a human being through the object created, through the work accomplished. Work no longer entails surrendering a part of one's being in the form of labour power sold, which no longer belongs to him, but becomes an expression of himself, a contribution to the common life in which one is reflected, the fulfilment of his social duty.

We are doing everything possible to give work this new status as a social duty and to link it with the development of technology, which will create the conditions for greater freedom, and with voluntary work based on the Marxist appreciation that man truly reaches a full human condition when no longer compelled to produce by the physical necessity to sell oneself as a commodity.

Of course, there are still coercive aspects to work,

even when it is voluntary. Man has not transformed all of the coercion that surrounds him into a socially-conditioned reflection and, in many cases, still produces under the pressures of one's environment. (Fidel calls this moral compulsion.) There is still a need to undergo a complete spiritual rebirth in one's attitude towards one's own work, freed from the direct pressure of the social environment, though linked to it by new habits. That will be communism.

The change in consciousness does not take place automatically, just as change in the economy does not take place automatically. The alterations are slow and not rhythmic; there are periods of acceleration, periods that are slower, and even regressions.

Furthermore, we must take into account, as I pointed out before, that we are not dealing with a period of pure transition, as Marx envisaged in his **Critique of the Gotha Programme**, but rather with a new phase unforeseen by him: an initial period of the transition to communism, or of the construction of socialism. This transition is taking place in the midst of violent class struggles, and with elements of capitalism within it that obscure a complete understanding of its essence.

If we add to this the scholasticism that has held back the development of Marxist philosophy and impeded systematically addressing the transition period, whose political economy has not yet been developed, we must

agree that we are still in diapers and that it is necessary to devote ourselves to investigating all the principal characteristics of this period before elaborating an economic and political theory of greater scope.

The resulting theory will, no doubt, privilege two pillars of the construction of socialism: the formation of the new man and the development of technology. Much remains to be done in regard to both, but the delay in understanding technology as an essential foundation is less excusable, since this is not a question of going forward blindly but of following a long stretch of road already opened up by the world's more advanced countries. This is why Fidel pounds away with such insistence on the need for the technological and scientific training of our people and especially of its vanguard.

In the field of ideas that lead to unproductive activities, it is easier to see the division between material and spiritual necessity. For a long time, man has tried to free himself from alienation through culture and art. While he dies every day during the eight or more hours in which he functions as a commodity, he comes to life afterwards through his spiritual creations. But this remedy bears the germs of the same sickness: that of a solitary being seeking harmony with nature. He defends his individuality, which is oppressed by the environment, and reacts to aesthetic ideas as a unique being whose aspiration is to remain immaculate.

This is nothing more than an attempt to escape. The law of value is no longer simply a reflection of the relations of production; the monopoly capitalists—even while employing purely empirical methods—surround that law with a complicated scaffolding that turns it into a docile servant. The superstructure imposes a kind of art in which the artist must be educated. Rebels are subdued by the machine, and only the exceptionally talented are able to create their own work. The rest become shamefaced hirelings or are crushed.

A school of artistic inquiry is invented, which is said to be the definition of freedom; but this 'inquiry' has its limits, imperceptible until there is a clash, that is, until the real problems of man and his alienation arise. Meaningless anguish or vulgar amusement thus become convenient safety valves for human anxiety. The idea of using art as a weapon of protest is combated.

Those who play by the rules of the game are showered with honours—such honours as a monkey might get for performing pirouettes. The condition is that one does not try to escape from the invisible cage.

When the Revolution took power, there was an exodus of those who had been completely housebroken. The rest—whether they were revolutionaries or not—saw a new road. Artistic inquiry experienced a new impulse. The paths, however, had already been more or less laid out, and the escapist concept hid itself behind the word

'freedom'. This attitude was often found even among the revolutionaries themselves, a reflection in their consciousness of bourgeois idealism.

In countries that have gone through a similar process, attempts have been made to combat such tendencies with an exaggerated dogmatism. General culture became virtually taboo, and the acme of cultural aspiration was declared to be the formally exact representation of nature. This was later transformed into a mechanical representation of the social reality they wanted to show: the ideal society, almost without conflicts or contradictions, that they sought to create.

Socialism is young and has its mistakes. We revolutionaries often lack the knowledge and intellectual audacity needed to meet the task of developing the new man with methods different from the conventional ones—and conventional methods suffer from the influences of the society that created them. (Once again the theme of the relationship between form and content is raised.) Disorientation is widespread, and the problems of material construction absorb us. There are no artists of great authority who at the same time have great revolutionary authority. The men of the Party must take this task in hand and seek to achieve the main goal: to educate the people.

What is sought, then, is simplification, something everyone can understand, something functionaries

understand. True artistic inquiry ends, and the problem of general culture is reduced to taking some things from the socialist present and the dead (and therefore not dangerous) past. Thus, socialist realism arises upon the foundations of the art of the last century.

The realistic art of the nineteenth century, however, also has a class character, more purely capitalist perhaps than the decadent art of the twentieth century, which reveals the anguish of the alienated man. In the field of culture, capitalism has given all that it had to give, and nothing remains but the stench of a corpse, today's decadence in art. But why try to find the only valid prescription in the frozen forms of socialist realism? We cannot counterpose 'freedom' to socialist realism, because the former does not yet exist and will not exist until the complete development of the new society. But we must not condemn all art forms since the first half of the nineteenth century from the pontifical throne of realism-at-all-costs, for we would then fall into the Proudhonian mistake of returning to the past, of putting a straightjacket on the artistic expression of the man who is being born and who is in the process of making himself. What is needed is the development of an ideological-cultural mechanism that permits both free inquiry and the uprooting of the weeds that multiply so easily in the fertilized soil of state subsidies.

In our country, the error of mechanical realism has

not appeared, but, rather, its opposite. This is because the need for the creation of a new man has not been understood: a new man who would represent neither the ideas of the nineteenth century nor those of our own decadent and morbid century. What we must create is the man of the twenty-first century, although this is still a subjective aspiration, not yet systematized. This is precisely one of the fundamental objectives of our study and our work. To the extent that we achieve concrete success on a theoretical plane—or, vice versa, to the extent that we draw theoretical conclusions of a broad character on the basis of our concrete research—we will have made a valuable contribution to Marxism-Leninism, to the cause of humanity. By reacting against the man of the nineteenth century, we have relapsed into the decadence of the twentieth century. It is not a very grave error, but we must overcome it lest we leave the door open for revisionism.

The great multitudes continue to develop. The new ideas are gaining a good momentum within society. The material possibilities for the integrated development of absolutely all members of society make the task much more fruitful. The present is a time of struggle; the future is ours.

To sum up, the fault of many of our artists and intellectuals lies in their original sin: they are not true revolutionaries. We can try to graft the elm tree so that

it will bear pears, but at the same time we must plant pear trees. New generations will come that will be free of original sin. The probability that great artists will appear will be greater to the degree that the field of culture and the possibilities for expression are broadened.

Our task is to prevent the current generation, torn asunder by its conflicts, from becoming perverted and from perverting new generations. We must not create either docile servants of official thought, or 'scholarship students' who live at the expense of the state, practising freedom in quotation marks. Revolutionaries will come who will sing the song of the new man in the true voice of the people. This is a process that takes time. In our society, youth and the Party play a big part.

Youth are especially important because they are the malleable clay from which the new man can be built with none of the old defects. Youth are treated in accordance with our aspirations. Their education is every day more complete, and we do not neglect their incorporation into work from the outset. Our scholarship students do physical work during their vacations or along with their studies. Work is a reward in some cases, a means of education in others, but it is never a punishment. A new generation is being born.

The Party is a vanguard organization. It is made up of the best workers, who are proposed for membership by their fellow workers. It is a minority, but it has great

authority because of the quality of its cadres. Our aspiration is for the Party to become a mass Party, but only when the masses have reached the level of the vanguard, that is, when they are educated for communism. Our work constantly strives towards this education. The Party is the living example; its cadres must teach hard work and sacrifice. Through their action, they must lead the masses to the completion of the revolutionary task, which involves years of hard struggle against the difficulties of construction, class enemies, the maladies of the past, imperialism . . .

I would like to explain the role played by personality, by man as an individual leading the masses that make history. This is our experience; it is not a formula.

Fidel gave the Revolution its momentum in the first years, and also its leadership. He always set its tone; but there is a good group of revolutionaries who are developing along the same road as the central leader. And there is a great mass that follows its leaders because it has faith in them. It has faith in those leaders because they have known how to interpret its aspirations.

It is not a matter of how many kilograms of meat one has to eat, or of how many times a year someone can go to the beach, or how many pretty things from abroad you might be able to buy with present-day wages. It is a matter of making the individual feel more complete, with much more inner wealth and much more responsibility.

The individual in our country knows that the glorious period in which they happen to live is one of sacrifice; he is familiar with sacrifice. The first ones came to know it in the Sierra Maestra and wherever they fought; later, all of Cuba came to know it. Cuba is the vanguard of America and must make sacrifices because it occupies a forward position, because it shows the masses of Latin America the road to full freedom.

Within the country, the leadership has to carry out its vanguard role. It must be said with all sincerity that, in a real revolution to which one gives his all and from which one expects no material reward, the task of the vanguard revolutionary is both magnificent and agonizing.

At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality. Perhaps it is one of the great dramas of the leader that he must combine a passionate spirit with a cold intelligence and make painful decisions without flinching. Our vanguard revolutionaries must idealize this love of the people, of the most sacred causes, and make it one and indivisible. They cannot descend, with small doses of daily affection, to the places where ordinary men put their love into practice.

The leaders of the Revolution have children who, uttering their first words, have not yet learned to say 'father'; their wives, too, must be part of the general

sacrifice of their lives in order to take the Revolution to its destiny. The circle of their friends is limited strictly to the circle of comrades in the Revolution. There is no life outside of it.

In these circumstances, one must have a large dose of humanity, a large dose of a sense of justice and truth in order to avoid falling into dogmatic extremes, cold scholasticism, or isolation from the masses. We must strive every day so that this love of living humanity is transformed into concrete deeds, into acts that serve as examples, as a mobilizing force.

The revolutionary, the ideological motor force of the revolution within his Party, is consumed by this uninterrupted activity that comes to an end only with death, unless the construction of socialism is accomplished on a world scale. If his revolutionary zeal is blunted when the most urgent tasks have been accomplished on a local scale and he forgets about proletarian internationalism, the revolution he leads will cease to be a driving force and sink into a comfortable drowsiness that imperialism—our irreconcilable enemy—will take advantage of this to gain ground. Proletarian internationalism is a duty, but it is also a revolutionary necessity. This is how we educate our people.

Of course there are dangers in the present situation; not only that of dogmatism and not only that of freezing the ties with the masses midway in the great task. There

is also the danger of the weaknesses that we can fall into. If a man thinks that dedicating his entire life to the revolution means that he cannot be distracted by worries such as his child lacking certain things, that his children's shoes are worn out, that his family lacks some necessity, this reasoning allows the seeds of future corruption to infiltrate. In our case, we have maintained that our children must have, or lack, those things that the children of the ordinary citizen have or lack; our families must understand this and struggle for it to be that way. The revolution is made through man, but man must forge their revolutionary spirit day by day.

And so we march on. At the head of the immense column—we are neither ashamed nor afraid to say it—is Fidel. After him come the best cadres of the Party, and immediately behind them, so close that we feel its tremendous force, come the people in their entirety, a solid structure of individuals moving towards a common goal, individuals who have attained consciousness of what must be done, men who fight to escape from the realm of necessity and to enter the realm of freedom.

This great throng organizes itself; its organization is a result of its consciousness of the necessity of this organization. It is no longer a dispersed force, divisible into thousands of fragments thrown into the air like splinters from a hand grenade, trying by any means in a heated struggle with their equals to achieve some

protection from an uncertain future.

We know that sacrifices lie ahead and that we must pay a price for the heroic fact that we are, as a nation, a vanguard. We, as leaders, know that we must pay a price for the right to say that we are at the head of a people that is at the head of America. Each and every one of us readily pays his quota of sacrifice, conscious of being rewarded with the satisfaction of fulfilling a duty, conscious of advancing with everyone towards the new man who can be glimpsed in the horizon.

Allow me to draw some conclusions:

We socialists are freer because we are more fulfilled; we are more fulfilled because we are freer.

The skeleton of our complete freedom is already formed. The flesh and the clothing are lacking; we will create them.

Our freedom and its daily sustenance are the colour of blood; they are filled with sacrifice.

Our sacrifice is a conscious one: an instalment paid on the freedom that we are building.

The road is long and, in part, unknown. We recognize our limitations. We ourselves will make the man of the twenty-first century.

We will forge ourselves in daily action, creating a new

man with a new technology.

Individuals play a role in mobilizing and leading the masses insofar as they embody the highest virtues and aspirations of the people and do not wander from the path.

Clearing the way is the vanguard group, the best among the good, the Party.

Youth are the fundamental clay of our work; we place our hope in them and prepare them to take the banner from our hands.

If this rambling letter brings clarity to anything, it has accomplished the objective that motivated it.

Accept our ritual greeting, which is like a handshake or an 'Ave Maria Purísima': **Patria o muerte!** ('Homeland or death!')

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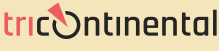

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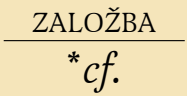

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ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA WAS THE LEGENDARY LATIN AMERICAN GUERRILLA FIGHTER WHO JOINED THE CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT THAT TOPPLED THE BATISTA DICTATORSHIP. HE PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION AND MADE AN EXTRAORDINARY AND ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO MARXIST THEORY. HE DIED AT THE HANDS OF CIA ASSASSINS IN BOLIVIA IN 1967.

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